



rotch traveling scholarship  
final competition brief 2022

# commoning the forum

*“The ethic of liberal individualism has so deeply permeated the psyches of blacks... of all classes that we have little support for a political ethic of communalism that promotes the sharing of resources.”*

*-bell hooks*

## context

On a small triangular block in the heart of Dorchester, between two converging grids, opens up an exceptional urban interior, uncommon to a residential block in Boston. This excess of yardage at the shared interior has fostered a culture of community and conversation within the block in keeping with Bostonian ideals of the commons. In resistance to increasing demographic displacement in the neighborhood, and to establish a permanent commons within the block interior, the homeowners turn to a common form of collective organization, establishing a Community Land Trust to provide a new community asset within the interior of the block as well as maintain housing affordability in perpetuity.

Proponents of the recently demolished Harriet Tubman House in Boston's South End and recent events of bell hooks' passing galvanize the block to envision a new institution, between a commons and a forum, in keeping with the philosophy and writings of bell hooks.

*Community Land Trust: CLTs are traditionally private nonprofits that hold land in trust to provide affordable housing and other community assets in perpetuity... Established in the late '60s, CLTs are an effective tool to gain community control of land in order to address community needs... In some places, CLTs have developed and maintained ownership of agricultural sites or commercial spaces for needed community services; in others, CLTs have created affordable residential properties. What sets CLTs apart from other nonprofits conducting or supporting mindful development, however, is their steadfast commitment to ensuring that the land held in trust remains a lasting community asset and that any homes on the land held in trust remain affordable permanently through lasting affordability controls and shared equity homeownership models. Despite “hot” or “cold” changes in the surrounding market, therefore, homes in the land trust are forever a stock of affordable housing, which continue to help family after family with modest incomes. Given a one-time public investment can create affordable homes in the trust for all current and subsequent households, CLTs are also applauded for their efficient use of public funds.*

source: <https://shelterforce.org/2016/11/09/land-banks-community-land-trusts-not-synonyms-or-antonyms-complements>



## **program**

The Community Land Trust has asked for the forum commons to be centered around three kinds of gathering: eating, performing, and conversing.

Each program is characterized by a primary space and an associated back-of-house. Eating is in dialogue with its kitchen, performing with its backstage, and conversing with its offices. Each program provides an opportunity to re-imagine typical notions of visibility, labor, community, and engagement, as well as an opportunity to redefine how eating, performing, and conversing occur.

In addition, designs must take a clear position on the nature of the forum and the commons, its relation to both its perimeter block of residents and the broader community at large, and its degree of access to each, either physically and/or digitally. Finally, designs must consider how the philosophy and writing of bell hooks may inflect such a space.

### ***eating***

food hall with seating for 100  
kitchen 1000 sq ft

### ***performing***

theater with seating for 100  
offices and rehearsal spaces 2000 sq ft

### ***conversing***

forum with seating for 100  
offices, AV, storage 500 sq ft

6 gender-neutral bathrooms

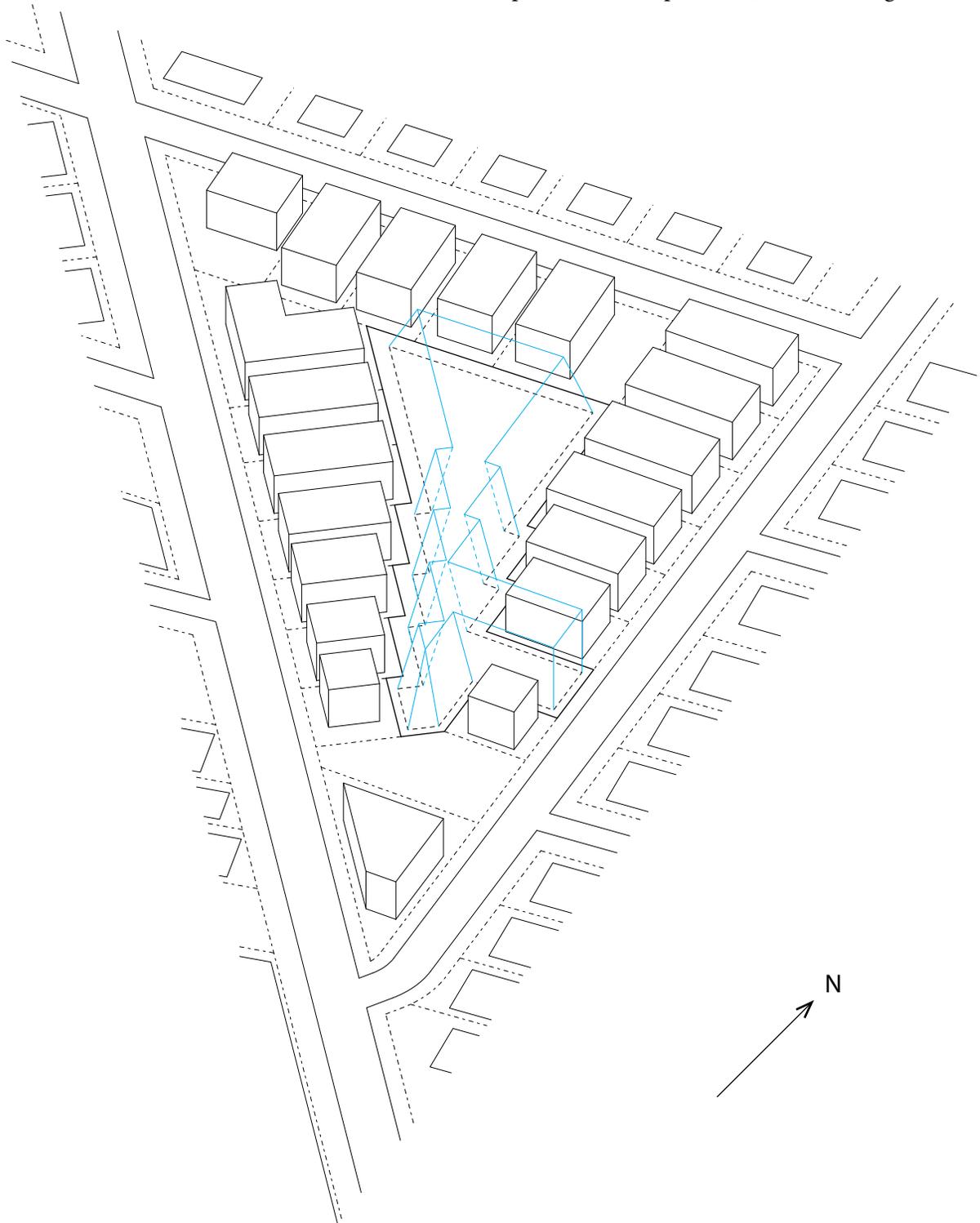
maximum height limit: 40'

While programs may overlap or be flexibly conceived, designs must accommodate simultaneous full-capacity usage of all three programs.

Structures designed for the preliminary competition brief may be shown in the final competition brief submission in site drawings or renderings. However, final competition entries cannot touch or rely upon design work from the preliminary competition brief in any way.

**site**

The site is located at 85 Topliff Street in Dorchester, and extends into the block interior. The triangular block is bounded by Topliff Street, Geneva Avenue, and Holiday Street. The proposal massing must not exceed the sky exposure volume shown in cyan. 3D model documentation is provided in .dwg and .3dm formats. If you have not received this information please contact: [polshan@architects.org](mailto:polshan@architects.org)



## built context

The block bounded by Geneva Avenue, Holiday Avenue, and Topliff Street are comprised of a mix between triple deckers and single/double family houses, with a single commercial property at the southernmost corner. Together, these are a typologically representative mix of many of Boston's residential neighborhoods

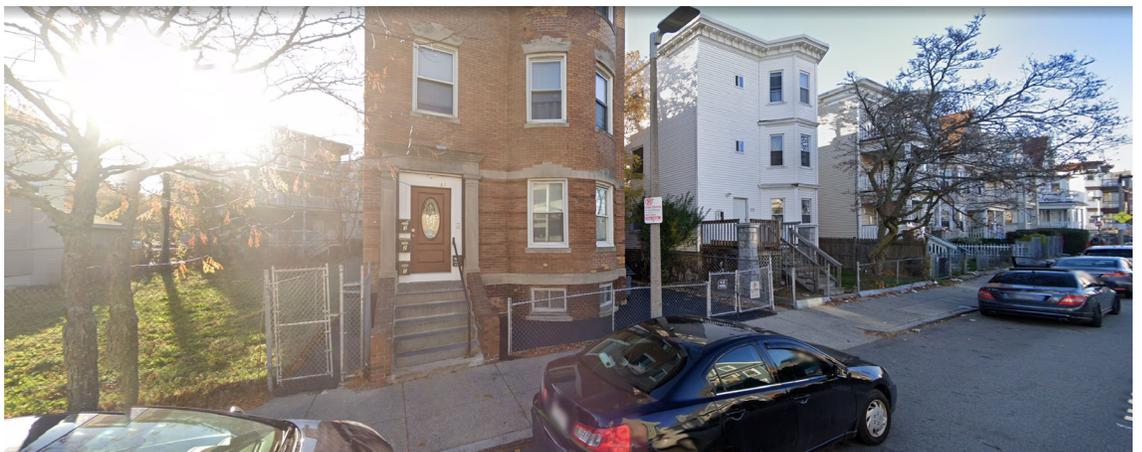
Geneva Avenue



Holiday Avenue



Topliff Street



## **documentation**

The submission is limited to no more than ten 16 x 9 format slides in PDF. Your drawings or other media should be clearly labeled and a descriptive text provided outlining the conceptual framework, agenda, and a basic description of the proposed design not to exceed 200 words. The following represents the minimum documentation required:

- One site plan, including ground floor plan
- Key upper level plan(s)
- Two site sections or sectional perspective views
- Site axonometric or aerial view
- Ground level perspective views
- Suggested diagrams: access diagrams to describe the forum common's relation to the public, program diagram, structural diagram.

The Rotch Committee reserves the right to use the submission materials for publication. Problem solutions submitted in the final competition become the property of the Rotch Traveling Scholarship and can only be used with its express written consent.

## **evaluation criteria**

The jury will evaluate the capacity of each submission to reason and imagine the architectural parameters in this brief, as summarized here:

### *conceptual*

Engagement with the issues outlined in the brief; resolution and legibility of the scheme

### *visual*

Representational capacities to describe the above strategies

### *verbal*

Verbal acumen of a presentation to the jury

## **submission of materials**

### *Electronic submission*

All proposals will be submitted and reviewed electronically. Materials will be submitted in a single, multi-page PDF document. PDF files may be emailed if smaller than 15 MB or transferred using a service such as WeTransfer or Dropbox if larger than 15 MB. Be sure to include your full name on each slide and to optimize your drawings and file for digital viewing.

Send to: [polshan@architects.org](mailto:polshan@architects.org)

Due by: 12:00 PM (EST) on 21 March 2022

### *Statement of Sole Authorship*

Sign and digitally submit the statement of sole authorship on the following page along with your digitally submitted materials.

### *Presentation*

Submissions will be judged on 25 March 2022 via Zoom meeting. On that day, finalists should arrive in the virtual waiting room at least 5 minutes prior to your presentation. You will have 10 minutes to present your work, followed by 15 minutes to respond to questions from the jury and general discussion.

**statement of sole authorship**

I hereby assure the Rotch Committee that I am the sole author of my submission for the 2022 Rotch Competition. I have not received criticism, suggestions, or help of any sort other than through the use of books and other published literature.

signed:

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print name:

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